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AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS INNOVATION MECHANISM (AIIM)-ASSIST

FY 2013 ANNUAL REPORT (OCTOBER 1, 2012 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2013)

OCTOBER 2013

This publication was prepared by ACDI/VOCA for the AIIM-Assist project generously funded by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development.

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ACRONYMS

ACT!	Act Change Transform
AGMARK	Agricultural Market Development Trust
AIIM	African Institutions Innovation Mechanism
APS	Annual Program Statement
CAADP	Comprehensive Agriculture Development Program
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
EAFF	East African Farmers Federation
FarmTrade	Farmers' Integration into Regional Markets through Structured Trade
FOSTER	Food Security, Sustainable Trade, and Environmental Resilience
IEE	Initial Environmental Examination
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS	Management Information Systems
OCA	Organizational Capacity Assessment
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
TEC	Technical Evaluation Committee
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

African Institutions Innovation Mechanism (AIIM)-Assist is a 36-month activity with a 24-month option, which started on August 6, 2012. The project is implemented by Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA) in partnership with Act Change Transform (ACT!).

AIIM-Assist complements AIIM, an initiative aimed at increasing the number of African organizations partnering with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/East Africa. Through the Annual Program Statement (APS), AIIM provides regional African organizations with an opportunity to apply for funding for activities that have the potential to contribute significantly to the regional Feed the Future (FtF) agenda.

The goal of AIIM-Assist is to provide technical assistance and related support to the AIIM grantees, USAID Missions in FtF focus countries, and African regional partners outside of AIIM.

The project has four major components:

- I. Management of the APS process.
- II. Institutional strengthening support to AIIM grantees.
- III. Technical assistance to other USAID Missions in FtF focus countries.
- IV. Technical support to USAID's African regional partners outside of AIIM.

This report summarizes and highlights activities and tasks that were accomplished in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 from October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013. Also, the report provides a summary of key monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities as well as an overview of project management and administration. The report further summarizes tasks planned for the first quarter of FY 2014. The annual plan for FY 2014 has already been submitted to and approved by USAID/ East Africa.

A. QUALITATIVE IMPACT

The year under review brings AIIM-Assist to 14 months of operation. The project continues to support USAID/East Africa to increase the impact of AIIM programs through strengthening the capacity of local and regional institutions to take up greater leadership roles in regional integration of agriculture. The following tasks were completed by AIIM-Assist during the year:

FY 2013 Q1:

- Participation in the technical review of the second call for AIIM APS concept papers.
- Organization of a proposal development workshop for six organizations invited to develop full proposals.
- Preparation of technical review files including proposals from six organizations for USAID/East Africa.
- Support to USAID/East Africa in organizing a full-day meeting on 'Knowledge Management and Learning in the Dry Lands of the Horn of Africa'.
- Development and submission of the AIIM-Assist M&E plan.
- Production of project marketing materials; information sheet and project brochures were distributed by the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) to bilateral missions during the quarter.
- Support to one AIIM applicant to revise its funding application and respond to questions raised by USAID following a pre-award assessment.

FY 2013 Q2:

- Participated in the technical review of the second call for AIIM APS proposals.
- Completed assessments of two online knowledge exchange and collaboration platforms for hosting virtual conferences and e-learning webinars for grantees resulting in the selection and use of 'GoToMeeting' for the May 2013 bidders' conference.
- Developed and released the Beta version of the AIIM-Assist project website for review by USAID/East Africa and ACDI/VOCA headquarters.

- Developed a training module outline for a three-day training on “How to Implement a USAID Award” in collaboration with Africa Lead (regional leadership-training program funded under USAID/East Africa).
- Developed a consultant database and identification of a core list of consultants available for Short Term Technical Assistance (STTA) assignments to support AIIM grantees and bilateral missions.

FY 2013 Q3:

- Conducted presentations on the AIIM-Assist program and opportunities available for support to USAID/East Africa and bilateral mission programs and initiatives to USAID/East Africa on May 9, 2013 and with USAID/Uganda on May 15, 2013.
- Arranged advertisement for the second APS solicitation released by USAID/East Africa in local daily newspapers in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Ethiopia.
- Co-facilitated two AIIM APS bidders’ conferences with USAID/East Africa; one was held in Nairobi on May 13, 2013 and the other in Kampala on May 16, 2013.
- Provided technical assistance to East African Farmers Federation (EAFF) in development of their first annual work plan, branding and marking plan, and Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP).
- Supported EAFF in the development of an action plan to guide start-up activities and interventions geared at addressing the special award conditions included in EAFF grant.
- Responded to a request for short-term technical assistance from USAID/South Sudan resulting in the initiation of AIIM-Assist support for a mid-term evaluation.
- Engagement of a short-term consultant in curriculum development to support the team in developing the “Implementing a USAID Award” training.
- Engagement of a short-term consultant to assist Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in revising the Regional Comprehensive Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) Compact.

FY 2013 Q4:

- Participated in the technical review of concept notes that USAID East Africa received following the second AIIM Annual Program Statement (APS) announcement.
- Provided logistical support to USAID/East Africa on a workshop held on July 11, 2013 to gather feedback from stakeholders on a draft statement of work for the “Resilience Learning” project.
- Provided support to EAFF in preparing a report for the first quarter of ‘FarmTrade’, covering the period April-June, 2013. The report was submitted to USAID on July 30, 2013.
- Provided support to EAFF in addressing the special award conditions. Through the technical support, EAFF has amended most of the management policies that were identified to be weak and presented them to the Board of Directors for consideration and approval. The amendments were presented to the board meeting in early September 2013 for approval.
- Developed the curriculum for the ‘Implementing a USAID Award’ training in collaboration with ACIDI/VOCA and USAID/East Africa which will be held in Nairobi from November 12-15, 2013.
- Offered full sponsorship to the ‘Implementing a USAID Award’ training to six local implementing partners of bilateral missions; two from USAID/Burundi and four from USAID/Ethiopia.
- Completed development, testing and internal review of the AIIM-Assist M&E database, approved by USAID/East Africa during the fourth quarter.
- Supported USAID/East Africa to organize a full day workshop on August 22, 2013 in Nairobi, for APS applicants whose concept notes were approved for full proposal development. The workshop provided participants with an opportunity to get clarity and ask questions related to the full proposal application process, the required format and proposal development tips.
- Jointly with AGMARK, developed a six month strategy for addressing institutional weaknesses identified by the USAID pre-award assessment team. The institutional strengthening plan was submitted to USAID/East Africa for review and approval.
- Participated in USAID/East Africa technical review of full applications for the second APS as a non-scoring member.
- Provided technical support to the East Africa Grain Council (EAGC) to prepare an action plan to address issues identified during the pre-award survey.

B. QUANTITATIVE IMPACT

FY2013 Q1

- Reviewed eligibility requirements of 23 APS concept papers and preparation of six technical review files for USAID/East Africa.
- Identified and procured of M&E software to be used by the project and AIIM grantees for tracking performance and reporting.
- Developed the AIIM-Assist PMP as well as capacity building and reporting toolkits for technical assistance to AIIM partners.

FY2013 Q2

- Developed the AIIM-Assist M&E Online database and initiated review/testing.
- Developed tools and templates to be used in providing capacity development support to AIIM grantees.
- Submitted a proposal to USAID/Burundi in response to a request for institutional development support to Burundi Agribusiness Chamber of Commerce. The AIIM-Assist proposal was incorporated in the Burundi Agribusiness Chamber of Commerce grant procurement.

FY2013 Q3

- Organized two successful APS bidders' conferences in Nairobi and Kampala.
- Developed M&E online database and the AIIM-Assist project website.

FY2013 Q4

- Completed an eligibility review of 42 concept notes received by USAID/East Africa following the announcement of the second AIIM Annual Program Statement (APS) in April 2013. The team also prepared materials and eligibility notes for the technical review of the concepts by USAID/East Africa team undertaken on July 15-19, 2013.
- Developed and submitted a proposal to USAID/East Africa on institutional strengthening of Agricultural Market Development Trust (AGMARK) to address issues that USAID/East Africa identified through a pre-award survey. This was in response to a request made by USAID/East Africa at the end of the third quarter.
- Provided short term technical assistance to COMESA to update the Regional Compact. The revised draft Compact was presented to a wider stakeholder meeting (validation workshop) in September 2013.
- Engaged two short term consultants to provide technical assistance to USAID/South Sudan in the midterm evaluation of the 'Seeds for Development (S4D)' project implemented by AGRA.
- Successfully completed the organizational capacity assessment (OCA) of EAFF on September 12-14, 2013.

C. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

Administration activities of year one focused mainly on project start up and set up of infrastructure necessary of successful implementation of the project.

Startup activities like, identified and set up of shared office space, procurement of office furniture/equipment, staff recruitment and deployment were all successfully completed during the first quarter of year one.

The project also completed the following administrative activities during the year:

- Developed and submitted the year one annual work plan to USAID/East Africa.
- During the first quarter, AIIM-Assist submitted a PMP to USAID detailing custom and Feed the Future indicators to be used to track the progress. AIIM Assist identified eight indicators, three standard and five custom to track progress of the project.
- Developed a project website www.aiim-assist.org, consultant database, identified and vetted a core

list of consultants available for STTA assignments to support AIIM grantees, and the assessment and determination of a webinar hosting platform.

- Responded to requests for technical assistance by other COMESA, USAID/South Sudan and USAID/Burundi. Engaged consultants to provide technical assistance to COMESA and USAID/South Sudan.
- Held staff retreat to review year one performance and develop the work plan for year 2.
- Developed and submitted and year two work plan to USAID/East Africa

II. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS (QUALITATIVE IMPACT)

A. COMPONENT I: MANAGEMENT OF THE APS PROCESS

Component 1 activities under AIIM-Assist focus on supporting USAID/East Africa in managing and tracking the AIIM APS. AIIM-Assist staff worked closely with the Regional Economic Growth and Integration (REGI) office of USAID/East Africa, assisting USAID to manage the routine operations of the APS process. The USAID COR retained responsibility for the oversight of all grants and cooperative agreements under the APS. During the year in discussion, the AIIM-Assist team achieved the following milestones:

1. DEVELOPMENT OF A DATABASE FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE APS PROCESS

During FY 2013 Q1, a request for proposals was issued to several management information system (MIS) development organizations. Five companies submitted proposals and were invited to make a presentation of their solution. Two software developers were subjected to an in-depth review, including a demonstration of functional software by their clients and past performance reviews. AIIM-Assist organized a demonstration of the two solutions for the COR and the mission M&E Specialist.

At the end of December 2012, AIIM-Assist identified and procured the services of United Business Solutions (UBS) to develop and customize an M&E system for AIIM-Assist and AIIM grantees. UBS was selected due to the functionalities its platform offered and its ease of use. The core features included support for multiple projects; customization of data collection and tracking architecture based on the unique M&E plan of different projects and performance indicators; and options for customizing data reports—from basic tabular export to log frames and results frameworks. The dynamic dashboard features news and updates; provides graphic information on the progress of key indicators; and highlights planned events on a calendar. Fully functional, the system enables all AIIM grantees to manage their data and easily produce reports.

Development of the database was substantially completed by the end of the FY 2013 Q1. The AIIM Assist M&E Specialist received training from UBS as a systems administrator, and later provided training to grantees in the use of the M&E system including, setting up new organizational profiles; uploading PMPs and customizing the database architecture to each new project; data input; data tracking; and report development. Grantees are responsible for regularly updating the data on the M&E database. USAID has access to the database to monitor the progress of each grantee. Each organisation can have multiple users based on the organisation structure. There is confidentiality between projects since different users were given different access rights.

During the year in review the AIIM Assist M&E Specialist trained and provided support to EAFF in managing data entry and generating reports. EAFF has demonstrated substantial interest in the new database and is actively involved in data entry, seeking support from and suggesting changes to the M&E Specialist and the developer. Furthermore, EAFF has uploaded a number of its existing projects (funded by other donors) to the database, and has used the database to monitor activities under these projects.

AIIM-Assist and EAFF began using and testing the system while providing feedback to the software developer, facilitating customization and refinement of the database. The AIIM-Assist M&E Specialist worked with EAFF staff during the latter part of the year to populate data in the system and test its functionality. EAFF was able to produce test reports from the data. The developer customized some of the features based on the experience and feedback from, AIIM-Assist, USAID and EAFF. These changes included:

- Development of an interface that enables entry of multiple projects funded by different donors.

- Disaggregating the results framework by project.
- Grant tracking using milestones.
- Event/activity documentation.
- Biweekly, quarterly and annual reports.

All AIIM-Assist data including biweekly, monthly and quarterly reports have been posted to the database. This also consists of information related to the tracking and management of the APS including: records of all concept papers received, eligibility status of grantees, full proposals received, technical reviews completed and awards made. Other data already uploaded by AIIM-Assist onto the system includes the list of participants who attended various activities such as concept development conferences and proposal development conference. The database allows for easy, one-click uploading, editing, and exporting of this data to Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word formats for analysis and reporting.

AIIM-Assist, ACDI/VOCA's regional M&E Specialist, and the database developer worked on improvements to ease navigation of the system by enabling data to be entered and viewed for unique projects; also, making the menu selection process more user-friendly. These improvements simplified the process of data entry and viewing of the results framework. The team removed the cumbersome scheduling of reports. Further enhancements included enabling data to be disaggregated by project, strategic objective, and intermediate result. The dashboards were refined to be more informative and included a map to show multiple project sites. Events scheduled on the partners' calendar/dashboard were made available on the AIIM-Assist dashboard.

Development of the M&E database was completed during FY 2013 Q3. The online system underwent rigorous review by the project team, ACDI/VOCA, and the USAID/East Africa M&E staff. The finished product is a superior M&E system that AIIM-Assist will use with AIIM grantees throughout the life of the program and one that AIIM grantees can use beyond AIIM-Assist to manage all project data and information.

The AIIM-Assist M&E Specialist manages the database, frequently updating information and data as activities are undertaken.

2. ADVERTISEMENT OF THE APS

AIIM-Assist explored mediums of supporting the mission to advertise APS news and information to a wider East Africa audience. AIIM-Assist worked with the ACDI/VOCA's regional project network to secure contacts with newspapers to advertise the APS in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. By the end of FY 2013 Q2, the AIIM-Assist team finalized procurement packages and payment arrangements for these advertisements with other ACDI/VOCA projects in the region.

In the APS calendar, the second call for concept papers for the first APS coincided with the start of AIIM-Assist. AIIM-Assist supported the mission by placing an advertisement for the second call for concept papers in a regional newspaper—the East African. Covering five out of the ten AIIM focus countries, the advertisement may not have reached the entire targeted audience, but it had the desired impact of increasing awareness and interest in the APS. In the advertisement, potential applicants were invited to an applicant's conference on September 17, 2012 in Nairobi.

USAID/East Africa released the second solicitation of the AIIM APS on April 18, 2013. The advertisement was posted in the six newspapers on April 22, 2013, allowing interested organizations ample time to plan their attendance in the bidders' conferences held on May 13, 2013 in Nairobi and May 16, 2013 in Kampala.

The closing date for the first round of concept notes was July 1, 2013. AIIM-Assist supported the mission by placing advertisements of the announcement in local daily newspapers in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Ethiopia and in one regional newspaper covering five out of the 10 AIIM focus countries.

3. SCREENING OF CONCEPTS

Following the second call for concept notes under the first AIIM APS, USAID/East Africa received a total of 23 concept notes. AIIM-Assist supported the mission by undertaking an eligibility review of the 23 concept notes, within the time provided under the APS calendar. The team used the eligibility review criteria contained in the APS.

An eligibility report was submitted to USAID/East Africa and contained summary notes under the following key sub-headings:

- General characteristics of applicants.
- Rapid analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the concept notes.
- List of applicants that completely satisfied and that did not completely satisfy the eligibility criteria.
- Areas of non-eligibility.
- General observations and recommendations by the review team.

Out of the 23 applicants that submitted concept papers in response to the second call:

- Fourteen applicants were non-profit organizations; six were for-profit organizations; one was a university; and one was a joint submission by a non-profit organization and a for-profit organization. The review team was unable to determine the incorporation status (type of organization) for one applicant.
- Of the 23 organizations that submitted concept papers, 17 were based in Kenya; two in Uganda; two in Burundi; one in Tanzania; and one in Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Eleven applicants completely satisfied the eligibility criteria. The remaining 12 applicants did not fulfil some eligibility criteria or some minor detail was missing. The reasons for non-eligibility varied from late submission to focus on the wrong value chains and missing budget notes.

The second APS solicitation attracted 42 concept notes received on July 1, 2013 as follows: 24 from Kenya, two from Rwanda, one from Somaliland, two from Tanzania and 12 from Uganda.

AIIM-Assist completed an eligibility review of all the concept papers, and submitted a report to USAID/East Africa with summary notes under the following key sub-headings:

- General characteristics of applicants.
- Rapid analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the concept notes.
- List of applicants that completely satisfied and that did not completely satisfy the eligibility criteria.
- Areas of non-eligibility.

The team reviewed all applications against the eligibility requirements in the solicitation. Seven concept notes were deemed ineligible.

During the FY 2013 Q2, the team ensured that the new M&E database accommodated the need to manage all information related to concept papers including the time of submission, numbers received, eligibility and TEC decision.

4. TECHNICAL REVIEW AND SELECTION OF APPLICANTS

During the year in review, AIIM-Assist supported USAID/East Africa in completing two separate technical reviews of proposals, one in October, 2012 and one in July, 2013, in line with the APS calendar. AIIM-Assist support included preparation of the technical review materials for the panelists including concept notes, eligibility review notes, review criteria, and scoring sheets. AIIM-Assist also provided one non-voting panelist at both technical reviews. The AIIM-Assist panelist provided input in the review process, and supported the panel by drafting summaries of the concept notes' technical strengths and weaknesses. Of the 35 concept

notes reviewed in October, six organizations were invited to submit full proposals. Of the 47 concept notes reviewed in July, four organizations were invited to submit full proposals.

5. ORGANIZING APPLICANTS' CONFERENCES

AIIM-Assist organized two APS bidder's conferences in FY2013, Q3: one in Nairobi on May 13, 2013 and a second in Kampala on May 16, 2013. The Nairobi conference, held at the Lord Errol Restaurant, was officially opened by the USAID/East Africa Mission Director and was attended by 58 participants comprising 40 men and 18 women drawn from 46 different organizations. Two of the Nairobi

participants represented Tanzania-based organizations while the rest were Kenya-based organizations. The Kampala conference was held at the Protea Hotel, and attracted 42 participants comprising 30 women and 12 men. One participant at the Kampala conference represented a Tanzania-based organization, while the rest were Uganda-based organizations.

The conference provided a forum for USAID/East Africa to clarify the APS application process, eligibility criteria and tips on writing winning concept papers. The question and answer (Q&A) session provided participants a chance to ask questions and seek clarification in all aspects of the application process. Questions ranged from the rationale behind the selection of value chains to budgeting questions.

AIIM-Assist also researched and secured a webinar conference solution in preparation for the bidders' conferences in May 2013. The objective was to ensure that potential applicants, especially those from other countries not hosting the bidder's conference would get a chance to participate in the conference. The team selected 'GoToMeeting' webinar solution. Unfortunately, only four people participated in the webinar of which one participant was based in Nairobi, two participants in the United States of America, and one in Nigeria.

Conference evaluations indicated most participants found the sessions useful, though participants also noted the conference was too short to answer all relevant questions.

6. PREPARATION OF FINAL PROPOSALS

AIIM-Assist collaborated with USAID/East Africa in organizing two proposal development workshops during FY 2013. The first workshop held on November 21, 2012 was attended by 18 participants representing the six regional organizations that were shortlisted by USAID for full proposal development under the second call of the first AIIM APS. The six organizations were all potential first time USAID grantees/contractors.

The workshop objective was to guide participants through the proposal format as well as the technical and financial requirements of a complete, competitive proposal. The presenters strived to address areas that most applicants seemed to struggle with during the concept development stage. Some of these areas included:

- Unrealistic implementation period inconsistent with expected results.
- Weak linkages between the proposed activities and FTF East Africa strategy.
- Proposed activities more nationally-focused rather than regionally-focused.
- Difficulties identifying capacity gaps and institutional development needs of applicant and implementing partners.
- Weak or no M&E strategy

Workshop participants were presented with an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarifications on proposal sections, especially those sections that were identified as weak in the individual concept notes. Mission contract experts were at the workshop to answer contractual and budgeting questions. Applicants were made aware of technical assistance and institutional development opportunities available from AIIM-

Assist for organizations awarded under AIIM. Also, the USAID/East Africa Communications Specialist made a presentation on writing tips for clear, concise and straight-forward proposals. The improved quality of the proposals received on December 6, 2012 was testimony to the success of a well-designed proposal-development workshop.

AIIM-Assist supported USAID/East Africa to organize the second full day workshop on August 22, 2013 in Nairobi, for APS applicants whose concept notes were approved for full proposal development. In addition to addressing the areas highlighted above, the workshop provided participants with an opportunity to get clarity and ask questions related to the full proposal application process, the required format and proposal development tips. The workshop, which was facilitated by USAID and AIIM-Assist staff, was attended by 13 participants representing four organizations. EAFF gave a presentation on their APS application and pre-award assessment experiences. The participants had a chance to interact with the USAID/East Africa Deputy Director Mr. John Pennell who attended the workshop and got a chance to hear about the interesting work done by the organizations represented, at a round table lunch conversation.

7. TECHNICAL REVIEW OF FULL PROPOSALS

During the year in review AIIM-Assist supported USAID in the technical review of applications from the two APS cycles.

AIIM-Assist received proposals from the six short-listed organizations from the first round of the first AIIM APS solicitation on December 6, 2012. Six TEC files were prepared and submitted to USAID/East Africa. During FY 2013 Q2, USAID/East Africa conducted the technical evaluations of proposals from the second round of the first AIIM APS solicitation. The AIIM-Assist Institutional Development Specialist joined the TEC in assessing applications submitted by institutions from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

The highest scoring applications were recommended to the Contracting Officer for possible funding by USAID/East Africa. There was a noted improvement in the quality of proposals received during this APS round. This was likely a result of the feedback applicants received from the panel on the strengths and weaknesses of their concept notes, as well as the guidance provided during the proposal development conference. It was evident; organizations who applied for funding previously (during the first call for applications) had taken into consideration the advice and comments received.

AIIM-Assist participated in USAID/East Africa technical review of full applications for the second APS as a non-scoring member. After receiving applications from the four shortlisted organizations on September 4, 2013 the technical evaluation committee (TEC) began its work on September 9, 2013 and concluded deliberations on September 17, 2013. The TEC identified some organizations that met the threshold for funding. TEC completed its report and made recommendations to the Agreement Officer on sections of the proposals that required strengthening.

8. PRE-AWARD ASSESSMENT

AIIM-Assist discussed with USAID/East Africa the possibility of taking an active role in the pre-award assessment including participating as a member of the assessment team. USAID/East Africa viewed the pre-award assessment as a confidential process, during which the potential grantee discloses confidential, privileged personnel and financial data. Therefore, it was determined that AIIM-Assist should not play an active role in the pre-award assessment. It was agreed that AIIM-Assist would collect the necessary information during the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) process instead.

During FY 2013, pre-award assessments for three AIIM applicants from the second round of the first APS, were undertaken by USAID/East Africa. The results of the assessment were crucial to the development of an AIIM-Assist technical assistance package when the grant was awarded. By the end of the financial year, USAID/East Africa had shared three pre-award assessment reports with AIIM-Assist, as a first step to developing an institutional development plan.

As a result of the pre-award assessment, the EAFF award was made with special award conditions to be addressed within six months with support from AIIM-Assist.

In August 2013, USAID/East Africa shared the AGMARK pre-award assessment report with AIIM-Assist, and requested that the project team work with AGMARK, to develop an institutional strengthening plan that would address the governance and management weaknesses identified by the assessment team.

In September 2013, USAID/East Africa shared East Africa Grain Council EAGC pre-award assessment report with AIIM-Assist to facilitate development of an institutional strengthening plan that would address issues raised during the assessment. The action plan was under development by EAGC and AIIM-Assist at the end of the FY 2013.

9. PROJECT INCEPTION

During FY 2013 Q3, project inception activities were undertaken with EAFF who was awarded a two-year grant (April 2013-April 2015) by USAID/East Africa to implement the Farmers' Integration into Regional Markets through Structured Trade (FarmTrade) project. The overall objective of the FarmTrade project is to integrate small farmers into formal trading systems to facilitate their access to national and regional markets.

EAFF is a first time USAID grantee and faces a number of challenges that might affect the successful implementation of FarmTrade. To help mitigate these challenges/risks and facilitate quick-start-up, the AIIM-Assist team met with EAFF on April 29, 2013 (less than two weeks from the date of the post-award conference) to discuss and schedule key start-up activities. Outputs of the meeting included an action plan for start-up activities and interventions to address the special award conditions included in the EAFF award.

The action plan included:

- Induction of EAFF staff on how to implement a USAID award.
- Preparation and submission to USAID/East Africa of a quarterly financial projection and the first cash advance request.
- Preparation of a marking and branding plan, first annual work plan, and first PMP for the project.
- Induction on the use of the M&E online system.
- Implementation of special award conditions; these are proprietary and thus not listed in the report.

In accordance with the action plan, AIIM-Assist provided support to EAFF in completing their startup activities. During the initial meeting with EAFF, it became apparent that a priority area of need by EAFF was in understanding the award agreement and its conditions. AIIM-Assist staff held a day-long training for eight EAFF personnel, where the teams reviewed every clause of EAFF's grant agreement. Throughout the training, AIIM-Assist explained what each clause meant and implications of each clause on the implementation of the project. Particular attention was paid to activities/actions that require prior Agreement Officer or Agreement Officer's Representative approval.

In addition, it emerged that some activities such as the branding and marking plan were nearly due, and EAFF was not prepared to meet the due date. AIIM-Assist advised EAFF to seek extra time from USAID/East Africa to enable them to provide a quality product, and then embarked on supporting the grantee to develop their branding and marking plan. This plan was submitted to USAID on May 20, 2013, which fell within the adjusted timeline.

To help EAFF meet their financial needs (associated with start-up), AIIM-Assist provided technical support in the preparation of the first invoice and cash advance request.

In preparation for the PMP development, AIIM-Assist worked with EAFF to identify standard FtF indicators for the FarmTrade project. A total of seven FtF indicators were identified, annual targets were projected and disaggregated by gender and location where applicable. The indicators were submitted to USAID/East Africa for review prior to submitting the indicators to the FtF Monitoring System. The indicators were approved and uploaded on the FtF monitoring system.

AIIM-Assist provided EAFF with technical assistance in developing an annual work plan and PMP for the FarmTrade project. This was carried out through a workshop held on May 22-24, 2013. The workshop was attended by EAFF representatives and additional partners, including the Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives and the Uganda Cooperative Alliance. A draft work plan with clear descriptions of activities; timelines and associated outputs; and a draft PMP with a results framework, indicators, indicator reference sheets and targets were developed, reviewed internally and submitted to USAID/East Africa. AIIM-Assist then worked with EAFF to incorporate USAID comments into the work plan and PMP.

B. COMPONENT 2: INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING SUPPORT TO AIIM GRANTEES

Institutional strengthening support to AIIM grantees is a core function of AIIM-Assist. This support is critical to ensure that AIIM grantees are able to effectively implement a USAID-funded project. Capacity assessment and needs identification were integrated throughout the AIIM proposal development process. Applying organizations undertake self-identification of capacity development at the application stage. As part of the AIIM grant evaluation process, an institutional capacity assessment of grantees is undertaken by USAID/East Africa through a pre-award survey. Although this process does not replace the in-depth Organization Capacity Assessment (OCA), organizational strengths and weaknesses are identified at this stage and inform USAID award conditions.

Organizations that progress past the pre-award survey and are awarded a USAID grant will have an OCA facilitated by AIIM-Assist, culminating in the development of an institutional strengthening plan to be carried out by the grantee and AIIM-Assist during the life of the award.

The AIIM-Assist institutional strengthening plans for each organization focus on addressing capacity gaps and needs identified by the applicant, USAID, and the OCA process. AIIM-Assist has a core team of technical experts capable of providing capacity development support in most areas of institutional development including financial management, strategic planning, governance, project development, project management, and M&E.

During the year in review AIIM-Assist developed a database of regional consultants to be used on an as-needed basis in providing short-term technical support to grantees. In addition, AIIM-Assist developed and finalized several tools to be used by the project team and AIIM grantees in building the capacity of the grantees to implement their grants effectively. These included the following templates: work plan; PMP; OCA report; institutional strengthening plan template; and annual/quarterly reports. USAID/East Africa's Local Capacity Development Team Leader reviewed these tools and provided guidance to ensure consistency with USAID's other local capacity building tools. All tools were made available to AIIM grantees via the grantee portal on the AIIM-Assist website.

Key Institutional strengthening activities implemented during the year included:

- Technical support to EAFF in addressing special award conditions
- Organizational capacity assessment and institutional strengthening planning for EAFF
- Technical support to EAGC and AGMARK in developing action plans to address pre-award conditions
- Preparations for the “Implementing A USAID Award Training” for AIIM grantees and other USAID partners in the region

1. EAFF

A) Technical Support to EAFF in Addressing Special Award Conditions

Following the pre-award assessment, USAID identified a number of issues that EAFF needed to address in order to strengthen its capacity to implement a USAID award. These issues were included in the award contract for EAFF has special award conditions. EAFF was given a period of six months (April to September 2013) to address these issues. The issues included:

- Align Board rules and regulations with the Finance Policies and Procedures harmonizing signatories’ requirements and specifying the approval and authorization thresholds.
- Revise the records management policies to provide for dual filing (electronic and manual) and records backup and clarify record retention periods
- Develop staff time allocation (timesheet) policy, design a time management tool and induct staff on using the tool in allocating time to various projects and functions in the organization.
- Develop a policy guidelines on the treatment of exchange rates that clearly stipulates conversion rates to be utilized and treatment of exchange gains/losses whenever such situations arise
- Revise procurement policies and procedures
- Develop a policy on management and mitigation of conflict of interest within the organization
- Develop a per diem policy that defines per diem per location, amount payable per day, accommodation and M&IE rates.

Since May 2013, AIIM-Assist has been working with EAFF in addressing these issues. Most included revision of various operational policies and procedures and monitoring implementation. AIIM-Assist engaged a consultant to provide technical support to EAFF in the review and amendment of the policies and procedures. Most of the amendments were completed in the period July-September 2013. The EAFF Board approved the amendments in a meeting held in September 2013.

Following is a summary of the specific amendments done on the various policies and procedures:

i. Aligning Board Rules and Regulations with the Finance Policies and Procedures

AIIM-Assist provided technical support to EAFF in revising the Board rules and regulations in order to align them with the financial policies and procedures particularly with regard to the role of the Treasurer, bank signatories and the setting of approval and authorization thresholds.

ii. Revision of the Records Management Policy

AIIM-Assist provided technical support in the comprehensive amendments of the records management policy. The specific sections of the policy that were amended included:

- The purpose of the policy
- The policy statement
- Amendments of various procedures including provision for dual filing, taking stock of records, approval of records destruction, records management life cycle, handover of records, clarification of the roles of various staff involved in the records management function, procedures for backup, the disaster recovery plan for electronic data, definition of terms related to filing and retention of records

- Staff commitment on implementation of the policy
- Provision of a number of forms and templates for use the records management process

iii. Foreign Currency Exchange management

EAFF policies did not adequately address currency exchange rates and the treatment of currency exchange related losses and gains whenever they occurred. Key amendments done to strengthen the policy and procedures included:

- Revision of the purpose statement to clarify staff responsible for implementation of the policy and procedures
- Revision of the currency conversion procedures to include sections on how to determine currency needs, obtaining currency conversion rates quotations, analysis, selection and approval of the appropriate dealer
- Inclusion of a section on staff commitment to the implementation of the policy and procedures

iv. Travel and Per Diem Policy

EAFF travel and per diem policy was not comprehensive enough to guide the entire travel and transport function. Key amendments done to strengthen the policy and procedures included revision of the purpose statement to clarify staff responsible for implementation, revision of procedures on travel authorization, claim for reimbursement, per diem and accommodation rates, and a breakdown (percentage distribution) of the meals and incidentals (M&IE) expenses and inclusion of a section on staff commitment to the implementation of the policy and procedures.

v. Staff Time Allocation and Time Management Policy

EAFF did not have a comprehensive time allocation and management policy and has never used timesheet as a tool for staff time management. AIIM-Assist provided EAFF with support in revising the time allocation and management policy and procedures, development of a timesheet template and staff induction on use of timesheet to allocate and manage time. The specific sections of the policy amended included the purpose statement, the procedures on time allocation and staff commitment to the implementation of the policies and procedures. The timesheet template developed included a calendar and instructions on how to fill in the timesheet and making use of the new developed codes for various projects and functions.

vi. Conflict of Interest Policy

EAFF had a policy on conflict of interest. The policy, however, lacked clear procedures on conflict of interest declaration and disclosure. The key amendments done to the policy and procedures included revision of the purpose statement, identification of potential areas of conflict of interest, revision of procedures on conflict of interest disclosure, conflict of interest declaration, conflict of interest register, and inclusion of a section on staff and board commitment to the implementation of the conflict of interest policy and procedures. Forms for conflict of interest declaration and disclosure were also included in the amendments.

vii. Staff Code of Conduct

AIIM-Assist provided technical support in developing a code of conduct policy and procedures. Key provisions in the policy include purpose of the policy, the policy statement, definition of acceptable code of conduct, procedures for implementation and staff commitment to implementation of the policy and procedures.

viii. Job Codes Policy

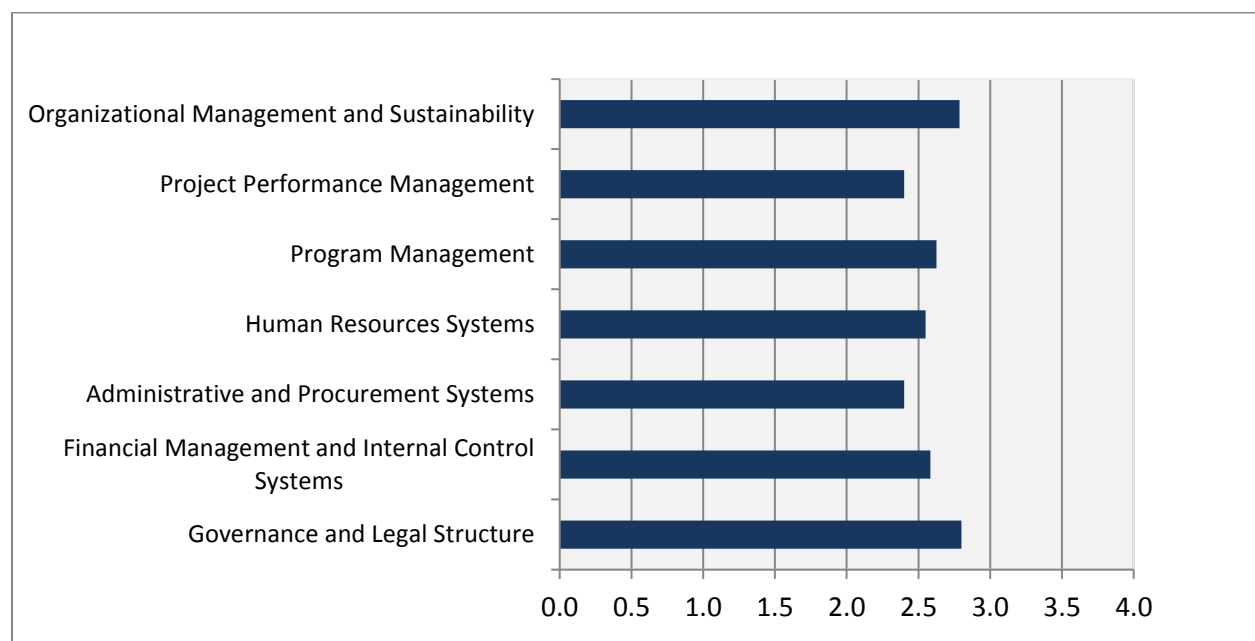
AIIM-Assist provided EAFF with support in developing a job codes policy and procedures for use in the allocation of costs among various projects and in the management of staff time. The new policy developed includes a purpose statement, procedures for definition, allocation and implementation of job codes, and staff commitment to effective implementation of the policy and procedures.

Revision of the policies is just a step towards making EAFF an effective and efficient organization. Following the EAFF board approval of the amended policies and procedures, AIIM-Assist will continue providing EAFF staff with technical support in implementations. A report on progress in implementation will be provided in the quarterly.

B) Organizational Capacity Assessment and Institutional Strengthening Planning for EAFF

AIIM-Assist facilitated an OCA for EAFF on September 12-14, 2013. The OCA was undertaken through a participatory self-assessment process involving representatives of EAFF staff and the board. The AIIM-Assist team used an OCA tool developed by USAID to complete the assessment. The USAID OCA tool utilizes a self-assessment approach to assess an organization's capacity as 1) Low Capacity, 2) Basic Capacity, 3) Moderate Capacity, or 4) Strong Capacity across 7 key capacity areas. These capacity areas include: 1) Governance and Legal Structure, 2) Financial Management and Internal Control Systems, 3) Administration and Procurement Systems, 4) Human Resources Management, 5) Program Management, 6) Project Performance Management, and 7) Organizational Management and Sustainability. Each of the capacity areas are defined by key characteristics written as indicator statements that distinguish between the four stages of organization development.

The results of the OCA indicate that EAFF is at the 'Basic Capacity' stage of organization development in all the seven capacity areas.



The key strengths identified include:

- EAFF has an established presence, is legally recognized across East Africa, and has a positive reputation amongst donors
- The organization has a well-defined mission and vision and organizational leadership structure

- The organization's long term plans are articulated in a strategic plan which informs its operations and programs
- The organization has a good portfolio of projects and programs funded by a number of donors
- The organization's board is representative of its constituency and has a diversity of skills and competencies and it is active in playing its oversight role
- The organization has a diverse staff that has the required competencies and is committed to the organization
- The organization has the core organizational infrastructure of systems, policies, and procedures

Key capacity gaps included:

- EAFF systems, policies and procedures are not consistently understood and applied by staff
- The organization lacks comprehensive policy guidelines in a few of its functional areas such as cost share management, branding and markings, management of volunteers and interns, sub-grants management and gender integration
- The organization does not have a well-developed M&E system to support performance management at the organization level
- The organization has not developed opportunities for generating unrestricted income.

EAFF and AIIM-Assist identified the following key interventions that will be implemented in to address the capacity gaps:

- EAFF should revise its management structure to clarify reporting lines for all staff
- The organization should revise its operational policies and procedures (finance, procurement, travel, assets, human resources and office operations) to ensure they are accurate, up to date, and clearly articulated.
- The organization needs to develop new policies and procedures for critical organization functions including cost-share management, management of sub-grants, and monitoring and evaluation
- The organization should conduct an induction of all staff in all the operational policies and to ensure all have a shared and comprehensive understanding of all operational policies and procedures and can effectively implement them
- The organization's management should periodically review implementation of all operational policies to ensure they are effectively being implemented
- The organization should review its internal communication plan to ensure all the information flow hitches are identified and addressed.
- EAFF should conduct an audit to determine the overhead cost rate and develop a comprehensive policy and procedures on cost share
- The organization should develop a clear and complete operational plan for the implementation of the organization's strategic plan.
- The organization should develop policy and procedures on the management of volunteers and interns
- The organization should develop a corporate branding and marking policy and procedures
- The organization should develop policy and procedures on gender integration across all its functions.
- The organization should develop enterprises for the generation of unrestricted income in order to reduce overdependence on donor funding

Following the OCA, EAFF and AIIM-Assist developed an institutional strengthening (IS) plan to guide implementation of the recommended interventions in the next one. AIIM-Assist will provide EAFF with technical support to implementing the IS plan. AIIM-Assist will facilitate a repeat OCA after one year in order to assess the progress made by EAFF in addressing the capacity gaps. The repeat OCA will also provide an opportunity for revision of the IS plan for continued organizational strengthening of EAFF.

2. AGRICULTURAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT TRUST (AGMARK)

As part of the APS procurement process, USAID/East Africa carried out a pre-award assessment of AGMARK the institution's technical, management and financial capacity to monitor performance indicators and to carry out activities proposed under USAID's Food Security, Sustainable Trade, and Environmental Resilience (FOSTER) community.

The pre-award assessment of AGMARK identified several areas of weakness that USAID/East Africa determined would need addressed as a pre-requisite to a USAID award or as an award condition. At a meeting held on June 27, 2013, USAID/East Africa briefed the AIIM-Assist team on these key findings. According to the pre-award assessment team, AGMARK has technical competencies for implementing activities proposed under FOSTER; also, it requires significant support strengthening around certain institutional systems and processes that are currently inadequate or missing. A meeting outcome was an agreement of AIIM-Assist to develop an institutional development proposal for AGMARK.

In August 2013, AIIM-Assist developed and submitted a proposal to USAID/East Africa on institutional strengthening of Agricultural Market Development Trust (AGMARK) to address issues that USAID/East Africa identified through a pre-award survey. This was in response to a request made by USAID/East Africa at the end of the third quarter.

During the months of August, September and October 2013, AIIM-Assist provided technical support to AGMARK in developing a detailed action plan to address the issues raised by USAID/East Africa. AIIM-Assist also developed a technical assistance plan describing the technical assistance that AGMARK required and level of effort in addressing the issues. AGMARK has submitted the action plan to USAID/East Africa and is awaiting approval/an award before commencing implementation. AIIM-Assist has planned extensive technical support to AGMARK in FY 2014.

3. EASTERN AFRICA GRAIN COUNCIL (EAGC)

The pre-Award assessment report of EAGC was shared with AIIM-Assist in September 2013. The report has several findings and recommendations, some of which must be addressed prior to any grant being awarded, with the remaining requiring resolution within a maximum period of one year. AIIM-Assist held a meeting with the top management of EAGC a few weeks to the close of the year to discuss the support that EAGC would need from AIIM-Assist to address the issues raised by USAID/East Africa. AIIM-Assist provided technical support to EAGC in developing a detailed action plan to address these issues. In addition, AIIM-Assist worked with EAGC to develop technical assistance plan describing the technical assistance that EAGC required and level of effort in addressing the issues. EAGC submitted the action plan to USAID /East Africa and was awaiting approval at the close of the year

AIIM-Assist provided technical support to EAGC in developing a detailed action plan to address these issues. AIIM-Assist also developed a technical assistance plan describing the technical assistance that EAGC required and level of effort in addressing the issues. EAGC submitted the action plan to USAID /East Africa and was awaiting approval at the close of the year.

4. "IMPLEMENTING A USAID AWARD" TRAINING

None of the current AIIM partners or those in the process of negotiating AIIM awards has prior experience implementing a direct USAID award. Judging by the pre-award assessment findings of the first two organizations (EAFF and AGMARK), AIIM grantees will likely face a number of challenges in the implementation of their awards. In order to mitigate the probable challenges, AIIM-Assist is developing training for all AIIM partners entitled "Implementing a USAID Award." The training, which targets the Executive Director, Program Manager and Finance/Grants/Procurement Manager of AIIM partner organizations, will address compliance, financial and technical aspects of implementing USAID awards.

Initially this training was developed in partnership with AfricaLead, a regional leadership-training program funded under USAID/East Africa. AIIM-Assist and a consultant from AfricaLead developed a training module outline. However, the collaboration with AfricaLead was terminated as AfricaLead was at a close out stage and their experience was in governance and not grants management.

AIIM-Assist worked in collaboration with ACDI/VOCA headquarters staff and USAID/East Africa in the development of the “Implementing a USAID Award” training curricula and materials during the last quarter of the year. The training will be held on 12–15 November, 2013 at the Windsor Golf Hotel & Country Club in Nairobi, Kenya. To date, 18 participants, 12 drawn from the four current and potential AIIM grantees (EAFF, EAGC, AGMARK and Kilimo Markets Limited), 4 from Ethiopia (partners of USAID/ Ethiopia) and 2 from Burundi (partners of USAID/ Burundi) have RSVP. The key objectives of the training are to:

- Enhance participants’ understanding of the background and context of Feed the Future programs and priorities for East Africa.
- Equip participants with knowledge and skills critical for successful implementation of a USAID award.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to identify capacity gaps that might hinder successful implementation of a USAID award, and develop action plans to address the gaps.

During the reporting period, AIIM-Assist finalized preparations for this training. Key preparation activities completed included finalization of the training agenda, the facilitation notes, training presentations and participants’ hand-outs, confirmation of participants, the training venue, and all the travel arrangements. Development of the training materials involved a series of review meeting both internally among AIIM-Assist and ACDI/VOCA staff and with USAID/East Africa.

C. COMPONENT 3: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OTHER USAID MISSIONS

During the first quarter of FY2013, AIIM-Assist developed a brochure that the COR distributed at a regional USAID conference in Uganda. AIIM-Assist also developed a one-page information sheet that the COR sent to the regional bilateral missions during the quarter. This served to introduce AIIM-Assist to bilateral missions and to notify them of available technical support from the project. As a result AIIM-Assist received the following inquiries/requests during the year:

1. SOUTH SUDAN

In FY 2013 Q1, AIIM-Assist received a request from USAID/South Sudan for technical assistance in development of a value chain strategy for the Ministry of Agriculture. AIIM-Assist responded by sending the mission a list of available consultants. The mission was given an opportunity to recommend a consultant of their choice; thereafter, the Chief of Party and COR met the USAID/South Sudan Economic Growth Director to discuss the mission priorities and figure out the best way to apply for AIIM-Assist support. The meeting provided a good opportunity to clarify the nature and possible duration of any AIIM-Assist support. After the meeting, the mission revised the request to a task more manageable for a short-term consultant. They requested to review curriculum vitas of experts to undertake a nutrition assignment with a focus on leading to the introduction of a nutrition component to an existing agricultural production and market project.

AIIM-Assist identified six nutrition experts and shared their curriculum vitas with USAID/South Sudan. This request was nonstarter after the mission indicated that they needed additional time to analyze their nutrition and FTF strategy.

Towards the end of the third quarter of FY 2013, AIIM-Assist received a fresh request from USAID/South Sudan for technical assistance in carrying out a mid-term evaluation of USAID/South Sudan's Seed 4 Development project managed by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. Project (AGRA). The mission developed a scope of work for the assignment which enabled AIIM-Assist to prepare a shortlist of consultants that fulfilled the requirements. CVs of potential consultants were then sent to USAID/South Sudan to give them an opportunity to select their preferred consultants. Two short term consultants, an Agricultural Economist and a Finance/Compliance expert were engaged to provide the technical assistance. During the months of August – September 2013, AIIM-Assist provided technical assistance to USAID/South Sudan in the mid-term evaluation of the 'Seeds for Development (S4D)' project implemented by AGRA. AIIM-Assist provided two consultants to undertake the evaluation, whose objectives are:

- a. Assess AGRA's progress to date in achieving the results and meeting the deliverables described in the Cooperative Agreement at a scale commensurate with expenditures to date and provide actionable technical recommendations for meeting deliverables.
- b. Assess how the project is being managed by both AGRA and USAID/South Sudan, making actionable programmatic recommendations on improving management, oversight, and reporting to both AGRA and USAID/South Sudan, including the Government Counter Part (MAFCRD).
- c. Develop lessons learned for future USAID/South Sudan interventions in the agriculture sector on a similar project.

The level of effort for this evaluation is 62 days effective August 26th. This assignment will be completed during the first month of FY 2014.

2. BURUNDI

In FY 2013 Q2, AIIM-Assist responded to a request for technical assistance from USAID/Burundi to build the institutional and operational capacity of the Agribusiness Chamber of the Burundian Federated Chamber of Commerce. AIIM-Assist developed a technical assistance plan that was incorporated in the overall assistance award to the Chamber. At the close of the quarter, the award was pending approval at the regional contracts office in Nairobi. The timing of this assignment is contingent on the overall USAID award to the Burundian Federated Chamber of Commerce. AIIM-Assist is prepared to quickly provide the support as soon as it is appropriate to move forward.

In FY 2013 Q3, AIIM-Assist followed up with USAID/Burundi to see whether there were any new developments on their initial inquiries. By end of the year, the mission had not responded to AIIM-Assist's queries.

3. ETHIOPIA

Near the end of FY 2013 Q2, another inquiry was received through the COR from USAID/Ethiopia. The FtF coordinator in Ethiopia sent a request to find out whether AIIM-Assist could locate a consultant to help the Mission evaluate the "push-pull development hypothesis, identifying geographic and thematic overlap". The COR shared the AIIM-Assist consultant database and advised the Mission to develop a scope of work for the assignment. In FY 2013 Q3, AIIM-Assist followed up with USAID/Ethiopia to see where there were any new developments on their initial inquiries, however, the mission did not respond to AIIM-Assist's queries.

4. UGANDA

AIIM-Assist organized a meeting with USAID/Uganda's economic growth and agriculture staff on May 15, 2013. The meeting purpose was to make an AIIM-Assist presentation and discuss opportunities available for support to USAID/Uganda projects and initiatives under FtF. The meeting was arranged to coincide with the APS bidders' conference in Kampala.

Also, during this timeframe, the team continued to build the consultant database with emphasis on areas in which the bilateral missions have expressed interest to date. In addition, the team developed a number of tools for use in managing consultants and ensuring quality control of technical assistance services and outputs. These included a technical assistance report template; a consultant evaluation tool; and a client feedback template for the technical assistance provided by a consultant

D. COMPONENT 4: TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO USAID’S AFRICAN REGIONAL PARTNERS

AIIM-Assist provides technical assistance to USAID/East Africa’s Regional partners outside of AIIM, who may include African host country governments, regional intergovernmental organizations, local organizations, and businesses. Activities under this component are coordinated by USAID/East Africa.

1. SUPPORT TO USAID/EAST AFRICA OUTSIDE OF AIIM

In the FY 2013 Q1, AIIM-Assist supported USAID/East Africa in organizing a meeting of stakeholders on “Knowledge Management and Learning in the Dry Lands of the Horn of Africa”. AIIM-Assist handled the logistics and note-taking of the meeting. The meeting brought together 30 participants drawn from 16 international research organizations; non-governmental organizations working in the dry lands; and some United National board organizations. Participants included individuals with experience and knowledge in humanitarian and development programs in the dry lands of the Horn of Africa; meeting purpose was to exchange ideas as well as to discuss gaps and priorities for knowledge management and learning. There were no discussions of funding or any upcoming/future procurement. As part of the FtF regional portfolio, this meeting reflected a key component of a larger multi-institutional initiative to build resilience and foster economic growth in the dry lands of the Horn of Africa.

In the FY 2013 Q4, AIIM-Assist supported USAID/East Africa in organizing a half day workshop to seek comments on the Resilience Learning Project currently being designed and validated. The project’s objective is to respond to a perceived need for mutual learning and knowledge management among strategic partners leading to a supportive policy environment and increased impacts of programming on drought resilience and growth. The Resilience Learning Project would implement analysis, knowledge management, and learning activities that build upon and add value to activities implemented by national drought resilience coordination groups, IGAD’s Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI), the resilience programming of USAID, and other relevant programs supported in the region.

2. COMESA

During the FY 2013 Q3, AIIM-Assist was approached by USAID/East Africa with an urgent request to support COMESA who needed the services of a consultant from AIIM-Assist. COMESA needed a consultant to provide support in carrying out a successful review, update and finalization of the existing COMESA Regional Compact. The goal of the COMESA Regional Compact is to add value to the National CAADP Compacts and to facilitate investments in areas where individual countries cannot effectively invest alone. COMESA Regional Compact was developed with the support of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network in August 2010.

AIIM-Assist provided COMESA with a senior-level consultant for 24 days during the months of June-September 2013 to update the COMESA Regional Compact. The consultant achieved the following milestones:

- Provided support to COMESA to review the draft COMESA regional CAADP framework developed by the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network in September 2010.
- Provided support to COMESA to review outputs from the October 2012 and April 2013 stakeholder meetings.
- Provided support to COMESA in developing a 15-page draft COMESA Compact document.
- Presented the draft COMESA Compact document to the technical workshop in Nairobi on July 20-21, 2013.
- Provided support to COMESA in preparing the draft final framework document and presenting it to a wider stakeholder meeting (validation workshop) COMESA postponed the wider stakeholder meeting (validation workshop) from 25-26th July 2013 to 26-27 September.
- Provided support to COMESA in finalizing the final COMESA Compact document incorporating output from the wider stakeholder meeting.

Noted also, COMESA incorporated CAADP in its strategic plan and subsequent work plans several years ago. Therein, it has maintained a strong political and technical commitment to supporting its Member States to embrace CAADP as a delivery mechanism for agricultural transformation. Sixteen COMESA Member States have launched the CAADP process, 11 of these have signed their National CAADP Compacts and six Member States have finalized the design of agriculture and food security investment plans. Four Member States have been successful in accessing funding for programs outlined in their investment plans. Many of the remaining Member States are in the in the last stages of completing their national CAADP processes.

III. PROGRAM PROGRESS (QUANTITATIVE IMPACT)

AIIM-Assist submitted a PMP during FY 2013 Q1 that will be used to track the progress of AIIM-Assist in achieving its capacity building goals. The indicator reference sheets populated with targets and actual results are annexed in this report.



AIIM Assist Annual
PMP Results FY 2012-

IV. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

A. ACTIVITIES

During the reporting year, AIIM-Assist completed the following activities under monitoring and evaluation.

1. DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMISSION OF PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN (PMP)

During the first quarter, AIIM-Assist submitted a PMP to USAID detailing custom and Feed the Future indicators to be used to track the progress. AIIM Assist identified three standard five custom indicators to track progress of the project.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF M&E ONLINE

At the end of December 2012, AIIM-Assist identified and procured the services of United Business Solutions (UBS), based in Dubai, to develop and customize an M&E system to be used by AIIM-Assist and AIIM grantees. UBS was selected due to the number of functionalities its platform offers and the relative ease of use.

The database was substantially completed during the second quarter. Core features of the database include: support for multiple projects, customization of data collection, tracking architecture based on the individual M&E plan of different projects, performance indicators, and options for customizing of data reports. UBS also offers online help and the system has a dashboard feature that allows users to quickly view project progress on all indicators. The dynamic dashboard provides graphic information on the progress of key indicators, highlights planned events on a calendar and features news and updates.

The system enables AIIM grantees to manage their data and easily produce reports. AIIM-Assist has provided training to EAFF, the only grantee during the first year, in the use of the M&E system including: setting up new organizational profiles, uploading project performance monitoring plans (PMPs) results frameworks, indicators and customizing the database architecture to each new project, data input, data tracking and report development. Grantees are responsible for regularly updating the M&E database with their performance data.

USAID has administrative access to monitor the progress of each grantee via the platform. While multiple users from multiple organizations will have access to the system, there is utmost confidentiality between projects because different users are given different access rights.

All AIIM-Assist data including biweekly, monthly and quarterly reports have been posted to the database. This also includes information related to the tracking and management of the APS including: records of all concept papers received, eligibility status of grantees, full proposals received, technical reviews completed and awards made. Other data already uploaded onto the system includes the list of participants to the bidder's conference, and proposal development workshops. The database allows for easy, one-click uploading, editing, and exporting of this data to

Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word formats for analysis and reporting.

The database development was completed and underwent rigorous internal quality audits by various colleagues at the ACDI/VOCA Regional Office and headquarters. The improvements have simplified the process of data entry and viewing of the results framework. The cumbersome central scheduling of reports was removed while data reports can be disaggregated by project, strategic objective and intermediate result. The dashboards were refined to be more informative with a map showing multiple project sites. Events that

are scheduled on the partners' calendar/dashboard are available on the AIIM-Assist dashboard. Other improvements have included redesigning the log-in page and adding report builder for quantitative data and enabling online spellcheck. The database was submitted to USAID/East Africa for final review.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF M&E GRANTEE TRAINING MATERIALS

During the reporting year, AIIM-Assist embarked on developing M&E curriculum materials to be used in the upcoming training on 'implementing a USAID award'. The curriculum includes session outlines, facilitators' notes, and training content/presentations. The training had earlier been planned for July/August 2013 but has been re-scheduled to November 2013.

4. M&E SUPPORT ACTIVITIES TO EAFF

M&E Online system

The AIIM Assist M&E Specialist received training as a systems administrator from UBS, and in turn trained and provided support to the first AIIM grantee, East African Farmers Federation (EAFF) in managing data entry and generating reports. During the reporting year, AIIM-Assist and EAFF began using and testing the online system and provided feedback to the software developer, facilitating customization and refinement of the database. The AIIM-Assist M&E Specialist worked with EAFF staff to populate data in the system and test its functionality. EAFF was able to produce test reports from the data. The developer customized some of the features based on the experience and feedback from EAFF. These changes included:

- Development of an interface that enables entry of multiple projects funded by different donors;
- Disaggregating the results framework by project;
- Grant tracking using milestones;
- Event/activity documentation; and
- Bi-weekly, quarterly and annual reports.

EAFF has demonstrated substantial interest in the database and is actively involved in data entry, seeking support from and suggesting changes to the M&E Specialist and the developer. Furthermore, EAFF has uploaded data from a number of its existing projects funded by other donors to the database, and is now using the database to monitor activities under these projects.

EAFF also requested AIIM-Assist to train some EAFF partner organizations on the M&E online system. This was undertaken in April 2013 and a team of 20 participants trained on the system's features, navigation, and data entry and report generation. They were also provided with access rights to use the system. Since it was a one day training, the participants felt that more time was required especially because of time lag caused by translation for the French speakers. EAFF provided feedback on the system and were overall ready and willing to use M&E online to document and report on their activities real time.

Currently, EAFF is using M&E online and has updated information, including results frameworks, indicators and results from FarmTrade and other major projects. The AIIM-Assist M&E specialist has been at hand to mentor EAFF staff as they implement the system.

Development of EAFF Standard Feed the Future indicators

On request from USAID – EA, AIIM-Assist worked with EAFF to identify standard Feed the Future indicators for FarmTrade. A total of seven Feed the Future indicators were identified, annual targets set and disaggregated. The indicators were submitted to USAID by EAFF for approval before ending uploading them on the Feed the Future Monitoring System.

Work planning and PMP Development workshop for EAFF

During the reporting year, EAFF and AIIM-Assist co-organized a three day workshop to train and support EAFF staff in M&E planning, work planning and development of a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). The workshop was participatory and facilitated by the AIIM-Assist team. It was attended by representatives from EAFF and its partners including Tanzania Federation of Co-operatives (TFC), and Uganda Co-

operative Alliance. The output was a draft work plan with clear description of activities, timelines and associated outputs. A draft PMP with a results framework, indicators, indicator reference sheets and targets was also produced. EAFF submitted the work plan and PMP to USAID for approval.

V. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

A. ACTIVITIES

1. OFFICE ACQUISITION AND SET UP

The AIIM-Assist team identified an office to be shared with other ACDI/VOCA projects within the first month of operation. AIIM-Assist moved into the new office space at the beginning of September 2012. Most of the essential office equipment and furniture were procured by the end of the quarter. The office was functional by end of FY 2012.

2. PROJECT COMMUNICATION PLAN

In FY 2013 Q2, the AIIM-Assist team developed a draft quarterly newsletter and discussed it with the COR and USAID/East Africa's Communication Specialist. Since the newsletter would have contained the same information found on the project website, AIIM-Assist agreed with USAID to eliminate this duplicative activity from the work plan.

During FY 2013 Q3, development of the AIIM-Assist website was completed. The website underwent rigorous internal quality control checks before it was given final review and approval by the USAID/East Africa Communication Specialist. The website has been fully migrated to the AIIM-Assist domain and can be accessed via www.aiim-assist.org.

The site provides information on AIIM-Assist, the APS process (redirecting to grants.gov and APS, where relevant), the implementing agencies (ACDI/VOCA and Act!), and the opportunities available to work with AIIM-Assist, either as a short-term consultant or as an AIIM grantee seeking technical assistance. The website has a resource page, where AIIM grantees and other individuals can access information on various subjects such as M&E, institutional strengthening, USAID regulations, and managing USAID grants.

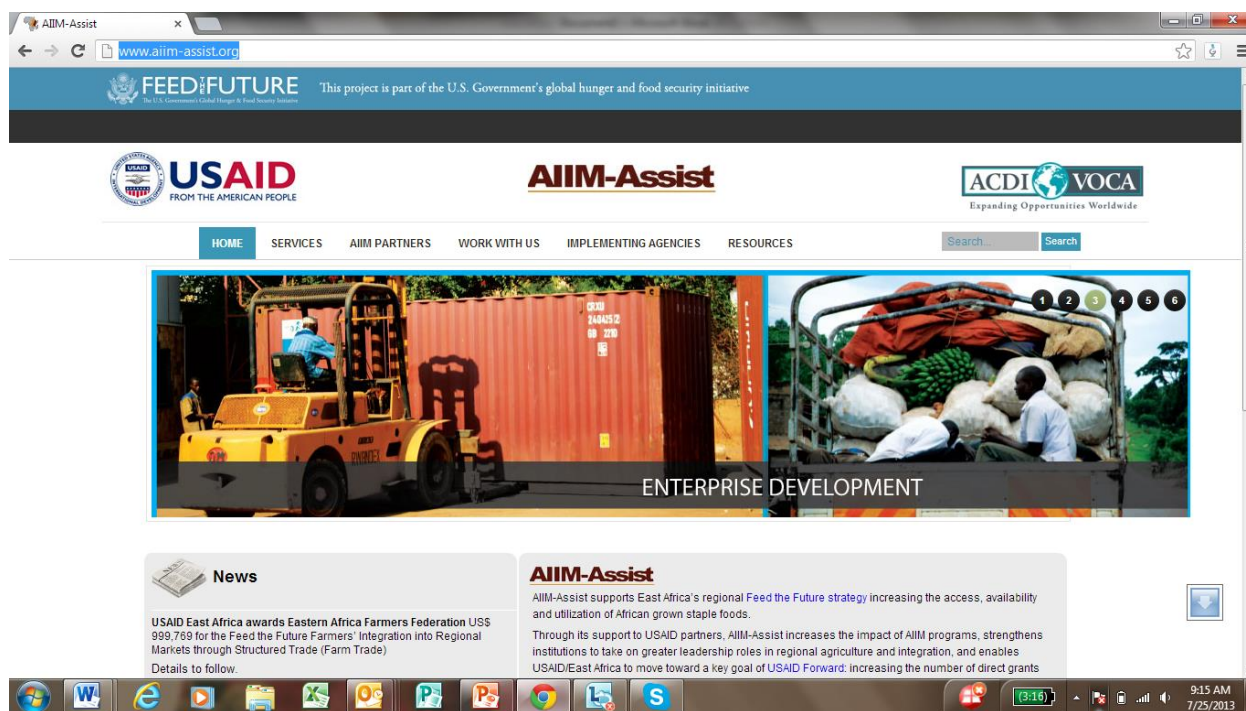


Figure 5 - The AIIM-Assist website homepage www.aiim-assist.org

3. PROJECT REPORTING

AIIM-Assist continued to submit bi-weekly updates to USAID. These now include updates from AIIM grantees as they come on board. At the end of July 2013, USAID/East Africa revised the reporting requirement to monthly FtF updates. Additionally, AIIM-Assist submits other contractual reports like quarterly reports as per contract.

The project team developed and submitted the year two work plan in September 2013.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE (REGULATION 216)

Section 117 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, requires that the impact of USAID's activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying out its development programs. This mandate is codified in Federal Regulations (22 Code of Federal Regulations 216) which, in part, require that the potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities are identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. In addition, the Recipient must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern.

USAID prepared and approved an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) located at <http://gemini.info.usaid.gov/egat/envcomp/repository/pdf/38090.pdf> for the program funding this Contract. The IEE covers activities expected to be implemented under this Contract. USAID has determined that the activities under this contract have a Threshold Determination of Categorical Exclusion and therefore do not require any further environmental review. The activities under the reporting period are within the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.

5. CONSTRAINTS AND CRITICAL ISSUES

The project continues to operate without any major constraints or critical issues.

6. CHANGES IN THE PROJECT

No major changes noted.

7. CONTRACT MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Not applicable during this year.

VI. FY 2014 WORK PLAN

FY 2014 annual work plan was submitted and approved by USAID/East Africa in September 2013. The work plan is attached.



AIIM Assist Year 2
Work Plan_final 19 Se